



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question August 13th, 2015

Date of our next meeting: Thursday, October 1st, 2015 at 6:30pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

The quiz at the next meeting: *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot* - prepared by Raf Jans.

Next meeting's toast presenters: The Master: Wilfrid de Freitas; Dr. Watson: Chris Herten-Greaven; The Woman: Rebecca Stacey; Mrs. Hudson: Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier; The Society: Maureen Anderson.

Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question held on Thursday, June 4th, 2015 at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

Present: David Dowse, Elliott Newman, Chris Herten-Greaven, Louise Corda, Ronnie Zilman, Carol Abramson, Paul Billette, Jack Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Susan Fitch, Raf Jans, Rachel Alkallay, Bruno Paul Stenson, Lawrence Reich, Wilfrid de Freitas, Maureen Anderson, Kathryn Radford, Arlene Scher.

Regrets: Erica Penner, Karl Raudsepp, Nancy Walkling, Mark Altosaar, Kevin Chappell, Derek Chappell.

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Sovereign Carol Abramson at 6:30pm.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

Welcome to our guests: Andre Beaulieu. and Nathalie Ellis.

Andre, and Nathalie, as did other recent guests, gave credit to last Spring's Gazette article about our Society for motivating them to come and join us and see what Montreal's Sherlock Holmes Society is all about. Welcome, Andre and Nathalie!

And welcome to our returning member: Kathryn Radford.

Read about Kathryn's skills as a detective later in the minutes!

1. Detective Work Locates Mrs. Hudson in Toronto

Ronnie Zillman encourages everyone not to hesitate to take on the task of giving a toast, because it takes just 10 minutes to find a toast on the Internet. This can also lead to some surprising discoveries. As a case in point he found, while looking for material for a toast to Mrs. Hudson, an ad, not fake but posted by a legitimate Toronto company, for *Mrs. Hudson to the Rescue*. "Let us give you a helping hand" is the friendly opening for this offer of household services such as cleaning, home organization, packing for a move, etc. But we thought the ad's cartoon illustration of this domestic goddess resembles Betty Crocker more than the Mrs. Hudson we know.

2. Dansk for the Memories

Chris Herten-Greaven brought for our viewing pleasure two Dansk Design hand-carved exotic wood match boxes. They were most probably at one time filled with small thin wax Vestas. A tiny metal design of a meerscham pipe is set into the wood. The design is so practical that when the sandpaper side panels wore smooth from use, they could simply be removed and new ones stuck on. Could be a lesson here for our modern throw-away ecologically unfriendly consumer culture. We believe that Vestas are surely mentioned in the Canon, but are not sure exactly where. Not to be confused with the Italian motor scooter, the Vespa!

3. A Guinea for Your Thoughts

Jack Anderson showed us a plaque displaying all the coins of the British realm up to the half crown. Chris and Patrick discussed that as a matter of elitism, certain things were paid for with guineas, for example if you bought a racehorse or were paying for a visit to the doctor, or were buying a painting. Chris recalled the witticism attributed to Victorian portraitist Stubbs who apparently when business was slow quipped that patrons could be quite willing to fork over 100 guineas for a portrait of their race horse, but the same men were reluctant to pay 10 guineas for a portrait of their wife. Last minted in 1813, 1 guinea equaled £1 plus 1 shilling. In England the word is still used today to refer to a sum of 21 shillings, when discussing prices of luxury goods.

4. Pip, Pip, Horray!

Louise Corda told us that Montreal Gazette editorial cartoonist Aislin, guest speaker at our most recent Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner, just received the 2015 PIP Award from the YMCA's Camp Kanawana in St-Sauveur. The Pip Award recognizes the achievements of Kanawana alumni, and thus is given each year to a former camper, counsellor or supervisor best exemplifying the camp values of selflessness and dedication to community. Aislin, a.k.a. Terry Mosher, was a camper at Kanawana in 1952 and 1953, and attended the ceremony to receive the award in the form of a paddle.

5. Visiting the Real Life Downton Abbey

David Dowse showed us a book he received for his birthday entitled *The Real Life Downton Abbey* by Jacky Hyams, published by John Blake, London, 2011. It is a fascinating non-fiction look at real life for the Toffs, and for the people "downstairs" in the 1890's to early 1900's when Sherlock Holmes was one of those Toffs! Here are many carefully researched insights into the regimented but *luxe various* life of the Toffs and their Ladies vs. the stifling controlled grind of the guys and gals working stiffs. It is a real eye-opener. Hyams largely validates the television *Downton* as giving us historically realistic drama. We all regret that the upcoming season of *Downton Abbey* will be its last.

6. An Illuminated Experience

Paul Billett brought to our attention a spectacular light show in the Eastern Townships - Illumination of the Gorge at Coaticook - 3D holograms plus laser light show called *Foresta Lumina*. Cost is very reasonable at \$10.00 but you must reserve ahead. It is happening till Thanksgiving. We're eager to go, but should we be on the lookout for Moriarty and watch our footing in such a Reichenbach-reminiscent locale? www.forestalumina.com

7. A Pipe Problem

David Dowse passed around a curved brown pipe. He gave the clues that it was made from five exotic woods and in a country well noted for its tobacco. Could we solve the mystery of its country of origin? Guesses included Turkey, the USA...But it was Kathryn Radford who correctly fathomed that the pipe was made in Cuba and was brought back to David as a gift from his daughter Genevieve on her recent vacation to the country, although David was utterly dumbfounded as to how she deduced the last part.

Further on the subject of pipes Patrick Campbell told us of an island in the St. Lawrence where he was part of a group doing archaeological research. There the remains of clay pipes told of a trading post where some unscrupulous rogue traders lured the Indians with liquor and tobacco to steal their furs by paying for them with trinkets, valuable furs destined for the Hudson's Bay fort. The Hudson's Bay trading post at the fort itself traded fairly with the Native People. The island is located off highway 40, headed toward Ottawa.

8. Let's Get This Straight

Chris Herten-Greaven explained the origin of "Bonhomme Sept-heure" or "Bone-Setter". In remote locations before medical care was available, when one had a broken arm or leg a strong man or woman of the village with practical knowledge would come to your aid. Forcefully, and with the help of strong arms to hold you down, some wooden splints, a piece of wood to bite down on so you would not swallow your tongue, and probably some strong alcohol, they would realign your broken bones. French Canadian mythology and folklore made this person, who usually brought much pain, into "the bogey man" to come and get small children if they were not in their beds at the assigned hour or they were misbehaving.

9. A Jump Ahead of the Competition

Carol Abramson introduced us to *Newland and Jump* at 54 St. Viateur Ouest, in Montreal's Mile End, 514-273-2738. This is a British General Shop where many things British can be procured. It gives the familiar *Bramble House*, at 57 Donegani, Pointe Claire, 514-630-6363, some competition.

10. Signature Required

Thoughts of shopping for British goods now brought us back to the subject of currency. Wilfrid de Freitas explained how when he first went to England in 1955 that the £5 note was a huge piece of

paper printed on one side and was so valuable (representing a week's wages for some people) and so uncommon that if the person didn't know you they would require you to sign on the back when presenting it for payment of an article or service. To collectors nowadays the notes with the most signatures, occasionally of celebrated persons, are the most interesting. Keep your eyes open for an Oscar Wilde-signed note.

11. Toast to the Master by Paul Billette

At Christmas 1887 the world was introduced to a particularly phenomenal character destined for such immeasurable acclaim that he would cast a shadow over subsequent historical events even overwhelming the literary powers of his biographer. Many stories will remain forever untold.

The essence of this character's appeal was not daring-do as in the public lore of the time, but rather his uncanny ability to unravel a set of data that had stumped lesser mortals and proceed to a logical and incisive conclusion. He was so coldly rational that he was often compared to a machine, the Analytical Engine of Charles Babbage.

I thought that it would be germane to recall his methods in detection that are still taught today by law enforcement professionals.

You know my method, it is founded upon the observations of trifles.

It is a capital mistake to theorize in advance of the facts.

See the value of imagination...we have imagined what might have happened, acted upon the supposition, and find ourselves justified.

We approach the case, you remember, with an absolute blank mind, which is always an advantage. We had formed no theories. We were simply there to observe and to draw inferences from our observations.

I never guess. It is a shocking habit. Destructive to the logical faculty.

The name of this character of course was Sherlock Holmes.

TO THE MASTER

12. The Bimetallic Question's Review of the Recently Viewed Film, *Mr. Holmes*

On July 15th a number of our members attended the opening at the AMC Forum Theatre of the latest incarnation of The Master on film, *Mr. Holmes*, starring Sir Ian McKellen.

Wilfrid de Freitas: A great film... Showed Holmes as a real person, totally believable, rather than as an action hero...So great to see in a current film a classically trained British actor portraying Holmes in a believable way...But Wilfrid would need to see it again to fully understand the Japanese flashbacks which seemed hard to follow.

Chris Herten-Greaven: Heard about the film's legal copyright difficulties, that almost prevented its US release, when he visited with the Sherlock Holmes group in L.A. a year ago. Fortunately these difficulties were ironed out.

David Dowse: Saw in Holmes a major flaw...Holmes did not know how and when to lie...Everything depends on the person and situation which Holmes only learned later in life.

13. Toast to Dr. Watson by Bruno Paul Stenson

There once was a man from Nantucket
Who admired Doc Watson's nip tuck-it.
For what could be bolder
Than to fuse leg and shoulder
And leave no spare parts in the bucket?

And so it goes for the poor Doctor. Mocked for not knowing his given name, John or James. Mocked for being the doctor who does not know in which part of his own body, leg or shoulder, he was injured during the war. Mocked for being the lesser intellect in the stories that are the product of his own pen. And, perhaps worst of all, mocked for being portrayed by Nigel Bruce as Sherlock Holmes' buffoonish sidekick in 14 films and more than 200 radio programs.

This being said, it should be pointed out that there is nothing in the Canon to suggest that the Doctor was not christened John James Watson, or James John Watson, though the latter trips less elegantly off the tongue. Nor is there anything in the Canon to suggest that he was not injured in both his leg and his shoulder. Or perhaps he was shouldering the blame for the injury to his leg and became - understandably in my view - somewhat confused. As for the intellectual superiority of his subject, this is simply par for the course when an author sets out to chronicle one of the Greats. And Nigel Bruce? Well, that is hardly the Doctor's doing, is it!

In the end, it is perhaps best to ignore the overabundance of fodder for mockery and to focus instead on the rare instances when the Master himself praises the Doctor. How very much is said when, on one occasion, Holmes calls Watson his only friend? Given the source, that is very high praise, indeed.

Ladies and gentlemen, to the Doctor.

14. What Would Holmes and Watson Do?

Would Holmes and Watson have gone out to eat Fish and Chips? I know I sure would in Montreal. Being a fish and chips fanatic, I have located in Montreal three fantastic restaurants that serve this traditional English fare:

- *Comptoir 21 Fish and Chips* at 4844 Rue Wellington, Montreal 514-546-FISH(3474) and...
 - *La Cueue de Poisson* at 3779 Rue Wellington, Montreal 514-507-TAIL (8245) and...
 - *Brit and Chips* at two locations: 433 McGill near Old Montreal 514-840-1001, and 5536 Cote-des-Neiges near Lacombe 514-737-9555.
- See B&C's website for a bit of fish and chips lore : www.britandchips.com

Battered Cod and chips is my plate of choice and I will leave it to you to try each establishment to find the one you will rave about. Good fishing !!

15. To Send or Not to Send?

A discussion was begun on the topic of all the various Sherlockian articles and information being circulated on the Internet and in particular those that quite often are sent to our Society. Do our Bimetallic Question members want to be receiving all this material relayed to them in their email? The answer is that those who do, will open the letters and those that do not, will delete them. So let them keep flowing and we will choose on our own to peruse or not at our leisure.

Susan Fitch will pass on to all members through email particulars Peter Blau's monthly newsletter on the Sherlockian World, which is very highly recommended by Wilfrid. We note that Blau is the world's

leading collector of Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes information, publications, and artifacts. This to the extent that he had to rent out a whole new adjacent apartment in order to accommodate his vast Sherlockian collection. Peter Blau's name given to him on his investiture into the Baker Street Irregulars is Black Peter.

If you were not at the meeting and would like to weigh in on how much Sherlockian email you would like to receive, please let us know your views!

16. The Women Remember: Ladies Excel at Kim's Game

Paul Billette presented for us a memory game, first spreading out 21 items ranging from cork and cuff links, to matches and a legion pin, to a clock winding key and brass camel, to a hand-forged nail and Chinese chopsticks.

Next we had five minutes to peer at and cram these images into our memories, before all the objects were covered up again. Then we were given five minutes to note down as many of the items we could remember onto a piece of paper.

The Final Results:

Kathryn Radford 19 out of 21 - WOW !!
Maureen Anderson 17 out of 21 - 2nd WOW !!
Nathalie Ellis 16 out of 21 - 3rd WOW

And then the rest of the field. Prizes for the top three were Mars Bars.

To refresh your memory or help you plan your own Kim's Game, here is the full list of intriguing objects Paul chose: 1- Chinese chopsticks; 2- thread spool; 3- fountain pen; 4- sherlockian brooch; 5- coaster; 6- E.T. ; 7- cuff link; 8- cork; 9- Canadian Silver Loonie; 10- key chain; 11- matches; 12- bookmark; 13- legion pin; 14- spinning top; 15- Sherlock Holmes magnet; 16- clock winding key; 17- gold \$100.00 coin; 18- bottle opener; 19- memorial medal; 20- brass camel; 21- hand forged iron nail; Et c'est tout!

17. Toast to The Woman read by Jack Anderson

Rebecca Stacey was to give us her toast to The Woman but unfortunately she was unable to be with us. Hope you can make it soon Rebecca, we miss you. Carol Abramson pulled from her Toast Bag a Toast to The Woman and Jack Anderson presented it.

Irene Adler...woman of mystery...who, as it is written in *A Scandal in Bohemia*, "eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex" was young, beautiful, bright, talented, and charming. A noted diva and adventuress, she captivated royalty. By her late twenties, she had already retired from a successful operatic career, and was well known in many countries. Quite a history...

Discarded by a King for not being of his own station, Irene used a little blackmail to remind him of her former place in his life. Holmes was set on her trail, only to first find himself a witness at Irene's wedding, and then find himself outsmarted by a woman in drag who saucily wished him "Good night, Mr Holmes."

Upon his appearance at her home the next morning, Holmes discovered Irene and her new husband had skipped the country, leaving behind her photograph (which eventually wound up as one Holmes' prized possessions) and a letter addressed to Sherlock stating that the King was safe from her and she had married "a better man than he." Irene's cleverness stayed with Holmes forever. After all, "The Woman", as he referred to her after the case, was the **only** woman able to best Sherlock Holmes at his own game.

It is my opinion that Irene Adler would be proud to discover that since her retirement from public life,

she has gone on to serve as a character in many novels, television shows, comic books, movies and even, manga. And to all Sherlockians everywhere, she will be forever enshrined as - The Woman.

To the Woman!

18. The Tie That Binds

Patrick Campbell played a unique role in a Scottish wedding at this year's Highland Games held August 2nd at Therrien Park in Verdun. For the past twenty years Patrick has been serving as the Quebec Commissioner of the Clan Campbell. He performed the Handfasting Ceremony (Tying the Knot) for a gentleman originally from Poland and a lady from Montana. Patrick discovered the bride's grandfather was a Glenday, which is a sept of the Campbells. Therefore ribbon of the Campbell clan was used in the ceremony to "hand fasten" the betrothed couple together, so they now become one.

Traditionally the first task they undertake together as a couple is to leap over a broom. That they have undertaken the task together during the wedding ceremony indicates they are now joined. Patrick held the broom about 10 inches off the ground while the newlyweds leapt over it. Then the piper at the wedding played the beautiful tune, *Mary's Wedding*.

As far as we know this is the first time that a handfasting ceremony has been seen at a Highland Games in Montreal. There is some question as to whether this ceremony can be recognized in Quebec. Google "handfasting" and you will find many informative entries on this at least four centuries old ceremony.

Susan Fitch, who attended the wedding as a witness, heard that the handfasting wedding ceremony was featured in the 1995 Mel Gibson movie *Braveheart*, which has led to a greatly increased popularity of the ceremony and much renewed interest in having it performed.

19. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Ronnie Zilman

Ronnie Zilman toasted Mrs. Hudson with help from Google and the Mrs. Hudson of the BBC series Sherlock.

Just to make things absolutely clear, Mrs. Hudson is in fact the landlady of 221 Baker Street, not the housekeeper! Have you got that? The landlady, NOT the housekeeper, so don't be expecting her to make a cup of tea for you...although she'll probably be putting the kettle on in a minute anyway...fancy a biscuit too?

A widow after her husband got himself sentenced to death in Florida, Mrs. Hudson now rents out the other two flats in her building. Currently 221B is occupied by Sherlock Holmes, who was able to help her out by ensuring her husband got the death penalty, and Dr. John Watson. The flat does have a second bedroom, not that Mrs. Hudson suspects they'll be needing two bedrooms, but they're quite broad-minded in Baker Street, after all Mrs. Turner next door's got married ones.

The basement flat 221C is still available should anyone be looking for a nice little place in central London. A prime spot, the location is quiet, calm, peaceful, apart from the occupants in 221B having a little domestic, and the sound of occasional gunfire (again coming from 221B), oh and also that time there was a massive explosion opposite! Oh no, it wasn't a bomb, gas explosion apparently.

Anyway, please contact the landlady (not housekeeper) Mrs. Hudson at 221A if you are interested in the possibility of renting this flat, anyone may apply, she's got all sorts around here.

To Mrs. Hudson!

20. Tonight's Quiz: *A Case of Identity* prepared and offered by Carol Abramson.

Identifiable Results and Prizes

1st Place:	Raf Jans	78 out of 83	Spotted Dick Pudding
2nd Place:	Wilfrid de Freitas	64 out of 83	Jar of Lyle's Golden Syrup
3rd Place	Lawrence Reich	57.5 out of 83	Orange, Lemon, and Grapefruit Travel Sweets

All the prizes were purchased at *Newland and Jump - A British General Shop*. We nostalgically remember the old Lyle's Syrup motto: "From out of the strong came forth sweetness", that accompanied the image of the lion and bees on the tin.

Chris pointed out that it is not so many years ago that we had a quiz on this same story.

21. A review of the quiz story: *A Case of Identity*

Paul Billette: highlighted the appearance of one of Holmes' key "isms" early in the story: "Depend upon it, there is nothing so unnatural as the commonplace." What doesn't astonish can still conceal crime. And there is Holmes's incredible put-down of Watson when he tells him, after hearing his detailed description of Mary Sutherland, "Upon my word, Watson, you are coming along wonderfully. You have done very well indeed. It is true that you have missed everything of importance."

Patrick and Wilfrid: Mary not able to see through the disguise? Admittedly an implausible, weak story.

Rachel: Yet in those days the social rules were different. Courting couples did not touch. So maybe...

David: Still, how could Miss Mary Sutherland *not* see that it was her step-father?

Maybe she did, but it made no difference?

What was her mother thinking?

Would this have made the US and British tabloids today - YES

Who accepts a marriage proposal after just one date?

Bruno: Who really provided the dollars or pounds to Mary Sutherland? Not the uncle Ned from Auckland, New Zealand, but the bank that gave her the interest.

22. Letter to the Editor *This correspondence just received:*

Dear David,

I recently discovered the world of Sherlock Holmes through your Bimetallic Question website and am writing to you from Denmark.

Regarding your observations on Conan Doyle's story *A Case of Identity*, you raise the question of who would decide to get married after just one date.

If you watch the recent Hans Christian Andersen-inspired Walt Disney film *Frozen*, in which I had the opportunity to appear, you will observe exactly how my friend Anna decided to marry Prince Mr. Wrong (my wording of his name) after only just one date, or even half a date.

And I promise you that my feelings are not hurt that you didn't see the movie already.

I look forward to learning much more about Sherlock Holmes!

Your reader and friend,

Olaf

23. A Family Wedding In the Days of Fabulous Hats

In keeping with the story line of marriage in *A Case of Identity*, Patrick showed us a family wedding picture taken in England in 1914. Especially interesting were the ladies hats in the picture, and Patrick's aunt could be easily identified by the feather in her hat. His mother was already in Canada when the photo was taken. She was born in 1880, five years before Lord Strathcona drove the last spike completing the railway stretching across the new country of Canada.

24. Toast to the Society by Chris Herten-Greaven

Regretfully Chris was unable to read his full toast to the Society at our last meeting due to the constraints of time at evening's end; here is the full text:

Dear Society members:

Where did the generic name of our august little group come from, since there were many to choose from? Here are some of them:

- federation: Too much political flavour, historically, anyway, but note it is used in Spanish and French for sporting entities.
- union: Also somewhat political, and cheek-by-jowl with trades unions and the like, but note, e.g. Rugby Football Union.
- association: People with a common goal. Do we have one ? Other than to delve into things, places and persons mysterious, as prescribed by A.C.D. and his alter-ego ?
- club: Rather too sporty, chummy and convivial: a few 'nibblies' and the odd glass of port/sherry don't count. Note, however, that A.C.D. was quite a sportsman, and might not agree with this exclusion.
- guild: a group of people in the same trade/profession; we are a bit too diverse in our vocations for that to be appropriate.
- fraternity: too sexist by far, even divisive !!! Sorority anyone ?
- order: there is a religious tinge here, although all professions in Québec group their members into professional orders, 45 of them in all. I don't think we want to go there.
- congregation: too religious by far; we don't want the agnostics and atheists among us to feel unwelcome.

So in the end we are left with 'Society'; after all when we refer to the mass of humanity around us we often say "in society, we usually...", or "..., we rarely...", etc., etc., Ladies and gentlemen I leave you with a well chosen word for a well chosen group; let us toast it:

The Society !

25. A Sonnet to the Society by Patrick Campbell

In our previous minutes of June 4th, 2015 a line was inadvertently omitted from Patrick Campbell's toast to the Society, written in the form of an Italian sonnet. Here is the complete fourteen line sonnet!

A Sonnet to the Society (Italian)

Let me only to our Society be true,
admit impediments, hoping all the while
to lay before our oh so motley crew
a glimpse of truth, or failing that a smile.

Oh no. it is an ever fixed rule,
that to the Canon all of us be true.
It is our single aim, how e'er so cruel,
To plumb its depths and see it all anew.

'Tis thus we spend an evening with our friends,
eliciting the truth from every tale,
assessing clues on which the plot depends,
solving the case that sends the thief to jail.

The game's afoot for all who wish to play
So welcome all who come to join the fray.

TO THE SOCIETY !

26. A Biblio Reminder

Whoever has the book *Birds of Prey* by John Ralston Saul, borrowed from Chris Herten-Greaven several meetings ago, would they please bring it to the next meeting. A clue to locating it on one's bookshelf is that it has a blue cover.

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, October 1st, 2015, at 6:30p.m.

If you detect any errors or omissions in these minutes please do not hesitate to contact our recording secretary David Dowse at daviddowse@hotmail.com .

A tip of the deerstalker hat to our sergeant-at-arms Hudson, Raf Jans, for printing and mailing Society minutes to all members requesting the paper version.